

## A Comprehensive Record of Archeological Remains Related to Gakkhar History

Gakkhars remained dominant throughout Pothohar and adjoining areas for hundreds of years. The power and wealth enjoyed by the Gakkhar chiefs has left its mark on the territory under their control in the form of archeological remains of towns and villages, forts, mosques and mausoleums, and structures erected for the public good i.e. caravanserais and step-wells etc. As remnants of a bygone era, these remains are in varying states of conservation and a few have been permanently lost due to the impact of natural disasters or unbridled developmental activities over the course of time. In this note, a detailed record of the archeological remains directly or indirectly associated with the history of Gakkhars has been presented. The archeological remains have been linked with their descriptions that have appeared in historical or present-day literature with a focus on those in which the author actually visited the site in concern in any capacity and made a record of the visit.

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I have been visiting and documenting the extant archeological remains included in the following tables since 1996. I have built up a sizeable collection of photographs that not only record the architectural features of these remains but also any improvement or deterioration in their state of preservation during the last two and a half decades. The most exhilarating event of my effort directed towards documenting these archeological remains happened during the early part of 2023, when I inadvertently spotted and photographed a historical commemorative plaque affixed inside a well located near the mausoleum of Mira Khan Gakkhar in the old Mirpur town. For the antiquity and detailed description of the commemorative plaque, the reader is referred to 'Historical Note on the Well Adjacent to the Mausoleum of Mira Khan Gakkhar', ver. 1.3, dated 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2024.

A list of archeological remains directly attributed to Gakkhars accompanied with brief historical descriptions has been presented in the following table:

Sr. No.	Archeological Site	Location	Brief Historical Description	Conservation Status	Documented
1.	Pharwala Fort	Kahuta, Rawalpindi	Pharwala was attacked by the Mughal emperor Babur (1483-1530) on 15 <sup>th</sup> March, 1519. The intended objective of the attack was to subdue the Gakkhar chief Sultan Hathi Khan and to compel him to submit. Babur has recorded this event in his memoir in fair detail and noted the absence of any battlement or	Poor	Yes

			breastwork at Pharwala. The fort as it appears today was probably constructed at a later date either by Sultan Adam Khan or by Sultan Kamal Khan and his immediate descendents. Pharwala fort was further strengthened in the coming years and it came to be recognized as a symbol of Gakkhar domination in Pothohar. In the aftermath of Sultan Muqarrab Khan's defeat and death at Gujrat, the fort was attacked and pillaged by Sardar Gujjar Singh, Sikh chief of the Bhangi Misl, in 1765. With the decline of the Gakkhar power in Pothohar, the fort fell into disrepair and survives today in a ruinous state [1-10].		
2.	Dangali	Kallar Syedan, Rawalpindi	Dangali was the principal town and the de facto capital of the parganah of Dangali for hundreds of years. At the height of their power, Gakkhar chiefs built mansions, mosques, mausoleums, stables, cellars, and water reservoirs etc. throughout the town, which now only exist as extensive ruins. At some distance from Dangali, a small dam was constructed at the confluence of three mountain streams passing through a natural rock cutting on the orders of Sultan Sarang Khan. The dam has long washed away and its only remnants are two massive rubble masonry piers located on either bank of the stream passing through the rock cutting [3, 11-15].	Poor	Yes
3.	Rawat Fort	Rawat, Islamabad	Rawat fort is in reality a caravanserai and its construction is generally attributed to Sultan Sarang Khan. Sultan Sarang Khan died while fighting the forces of the	Good	Yes

			Sur dynasty and his remains were interred in the Rawat fort by his younger brother Sultan Adam Khan. A mausoleum was constructed on his burial place probably during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605) [3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16-21].		
4.	Sultanpur	Dina, Jhelum	The village Sultanpur, now inundated due to construction of the Mangla dam, was an old settlement of Gakkhars and located on the southern boundary of the parganah of Dangali. Sultan Sarang Khan constructed a fortification wall to protect the village during the years when Gakkhars were resisting the expansion of the Sur dynasty into Pothohar. Sultanpur was later granted as jagir by Sultan Adam Khan to one of his sons and became the chief seat or mother village (mandi) of the Admal sept of Gakkhars in the Jhelum district [22, 23].	Vanished	Not Applicable
5.	Muazzam Nagar	Mianwali	Muazzam Nagar was a Gakkhar stronghold on the river Indus. It was abandoned in the aftermath of a devastating attack by a part of the army of the Afghan king Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722-1772) in 1748. The ruins of Muazzam Nagar were visible six miles south of the Mianwali district until they eroded away due to flooding in the river Indus in 1870 [24, 25].	Vanished	Not Applicable
6.	Chaomukh	Dadyal, Mirpur	Chaomukh, earlier known as Jagiot, situated on the right bank of the river Poonch, emerged as the principal town of the parganah of Andarhal during the first half of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century. Some time during this period, the parganah of Andarhal was granted as fief to Jabbar Quli Gakkhar, a mansabdar of the Mughal	Poor	Yes

			<p>empire in lieu of compensation for service to the emperor Shah Jahan (1592-1666). Chaomukh flourished as a market town during the Mughal era however its prosperity steadily declined during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The town was brought to a ruin during the first Kashmir war (1947-48) and was finally inundated by the construction of the Mangla dam. The mausoleum of Diwan Ali Muhammad Khan, father of Jabbar Quli Gakkhar and an old mosque located at the erstwhile village Kalarwari are the only remnants of the past still existing. At some distance from Chaomukh, in the vicinity of the village Unah Rajgan, a step-well with a fabulous back story is located. The construction of this step-well is attributed to a Gakkhar chief as well [23, 26].</p>		
7.	Old Mirpur	Mirpur	<p>The old Mirpur town was inundated after the construction of the Mangla dam and the population was relocated. During the winter and spring months, the water level in the Mangla dam reservoir decreases and some of the ruins of the old town reemerge. Among these ruins the mausoleum of Mira Khan Gakkhar, founder of Mirpur, a large water pond, remnants of the old fortification wall and the so called Hathi gate (west), town market, Hindu temples, and a magnificently built Mughal era step-well are noteworthy [27].</p>	Poor	Yes
8.	Mai Qamro Mosque	Islamabad	<p>Mai Qamro mosque is situated in the west of the Pharwala fort across the river Soan. The origin and historicity of the name of the mosque is</p>	Good	Yes

			uncertain. In the front of the mosque, adjacent to its courtyard and at a distance of few paces ahead, a number of graves built on raised platforms are located. In the northerly direction to the mosque, there stand two hitherto unidentified structures surrounded by a perimeter wall. These two structures display strong Hindu and Sikh architectural influences. The perimeter wall has decorative bastions at its four corners along with a vestibule in the east and a mihrab in the west. The space within the perimeter wall around the two unidentified structures is filled with numerous graves. The mosque and the adjacent cemetery, and the enclosure to the north of the mosque are intimately connected with the history of the Pharwala fort and the Gakkhars however the two unidentified structures may have been added during the Sikh era [7, 8, 10, 28, 29].		
9.	Sar Jalal	Sohawa, Jhelum	The construction of Sar Jalal is attributed to Sultan Jalal Khan. Sar Jalal is situated in the territory of the erstwhile parganah of Dangali and it may have served the dual purpose of being a local headquarter of the Gakkhars and as a halting spot for the travelers. At present, Sar Jalal houses a large water reservoir, remains of a caravanserai, mosque, and the lone standing wall of a residential building popularly identified as the mansion or palace of Rani Mangho, who was appointed regent as her husband Diwan Allahdad Khan withdrew from worldly affairs and became an ascetic [18, 28, 30]. The	Poor	Yes

			Mughal princess Jahan Ara Begum, daughter of the emperor Shah Jahan, has recorded an instance in the biography of her spiritual guide that while travelling to Kabul, she stopped at Sar Jalal and sent a few gifts to a saint who resided in the vicinity of this halting stop. She has identified the name of Sar Jalal as Taal Jalal Gakkhar. Taal is a colloquial term used for water reservoir. This event must have taken place prior to 1640, the year when she composed the aforementioned biography [31].		
10.	Sarai Kharbooza	Islamabad	In 1607, the Mughal emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) while passing through Pothohar, halted at the village of Kharbooza. He noted that the village owes its name to a dome resembling a melon that was constructed by the Gakkhars at an earlier time for the purpose of collecting toll from the caravans passing through their territory. The caravanserai was probably not yet constructed otherwise the emperor would have mentioned it in his memoir [18, 32, 33].	Poor	Yes
11.	Rawalpindi Fortress	Rawalpindi	The Gakkhar chiefs of the parganah of Akbarabad-Takhtpari remained in possession of the Rawalpindi fortress up till the advent of the Sikh era. The fortress was situated at an elevated location on the left bank of the nullah Lai in the north-east direction of the present-day general area of the Raja Bazaar in the heart of the Rawalpindi city [34].	Vanished	Not Applicable
12.	Kalakot	Gujar Khan, Rawalpindi	Kalakot is a collection of ruined dwellings located on top of hillocks. The central	Poor	Yes

			<p>dwelling is extensive and appears to have been fortified at some point of time. It is also the most inaccessible part of this archeological site. A partially demolished well constructed using dressed stones is located adjacent to the central dwelling as well. As legend would have it, the inhabitants of Kalakot indulged in banditry. They met their fate some time during the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of a punitive action directed against Kalakot. Apparently, the site was burned to the ground and the population massacred. The slopes of the hillocks on which nearly all the ruins are located are littered with potshards, charcoal, human and animal bone fragments, and miscellaneous items of everyday use [23, 26].</p>		
13.	Takhtpari	Rawalpindi	<p>The historical name of the village Takhtpari, which became the de facto capital of the parganah of Akbarabad-Takhtpari was Tarrakhpari. Tarrakh is a variation of the Sanskrit word for hyena. Apparently the village and its environs were the favorite haunt of a particularly wild and mischievous nocturnal scavenger. In the present day village of Takhtpari, the only surviving archeological remains are that of a plinth constructed using semi-dressed stone masonry with three bastions. The plinth overlooks a small stream and it may have supported a mansion or a watchtower. The stream is peculiar as a fresh water spring emerges right in its middle from an opening in the sandstone. The residents of the village have reported</p>	Poor	Yes

			that a step-well used to exist near the stream, which was filled in at an unknown date [35].		
14.	Ramkot Fort	Dadyal, Mirpur	Ramkot fort is situated on the left bank of the river Jhelum. The original construction of the fort is attributed to an individual named Toghlu who was perhaps a Gakkhar. The antiquity of the fort and its actual name are not available in the historical record. The traditional history of the Gakkhars identifies two locations namely Chana and Bhunir as their first settlements in the region. Both of these settlements were located in the vicinity of the fort. Ramkot fort remained a possession of the Gakkhar chiefs of the Andarhal-Mirpur region until the whole area fell to the Sikhs during the early part of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. The present structure of the fort was erected by the government of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The renovation and reconstruction project lasted for four years and concluded in 1859-60. It was during this period that the fort was renamed as Ramkot as well [23, 36, 37].	Good	Yes
15.	Baradari of Sultan Muqarrab Khan	Gujrat	The original construction of an oriental pavilion or baradari with an adjoining garden located at a distance of one mile from the Gujrat city is attributed to Sultan Muqarrab Khan. The baradari fell into disrepair after Sultan Muqarrab Khan's defeat and death in 1763-64. It was later reconstructed on the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) in 1835. During the British period, the baradari was used as the residence of	Vanished	Not Applicable



			the deputy commissioner of Gujrat [38, 39].		
16.	Bhalakhar	Kallar Syedan, Rawalpindi	Bhalakhar is a collection of hamlets and a union council. It is endowed with abundance of water and a rich soil, and the whole area is generally pleasant and suitable for agriculture. A number of Gakkhar chiefs maintained large allotments in the area while residing at a nearby village. At least two Gakkhar chiefs i.e. Sultan Hathi Khan and Sultan Dilawar Khan were buried in Bhalakhar [23, 26, 40].	Poor	Yes
17.	Mausoleum of Sultan Kamal Khan	Kara, Kaushambi	The exact date of Sultan Kamal Khan's death is unknown. He was interred in Kara, a town located on the right bank of the river Ganges in the Mughal subah of Allahabad. Kara formed a part of the vast estates of Sultan Kamal Khan as a high ranking mansabdar of the Mughal empire. At a short distance from his mausoleum, in the north-west direction, a village called Kamalpur still retains his name [41, 42].	Good	No
18.	Bhata Mausoleum	Gujar Khan, Rawalpindi	An open mausoleum surrounded by a small graveyard is located to the west of the village Bhata and generally attributed to the chiefs of the Fransial sept of Gakkhars. The mausoleum is colloquially referred to as Kali Khanqah by the residents of the nearby villages [43].	Good	Yes
19.	Chakswari Mausoleum	Mirpur	A mausoleum similar in architectural style to the family mausoleum of the Gakkhar chiefs in Dangali is located in the village Ghazi Gorha, which forms a part of the Kaneli union council of the Chakswari town in Mirpur. The mausoleum is locally called Hejira. The existence of such a	Poor	Yes

			<p>mausoleum in the Mirpur region was first reported by the author Raja Muhammad Yaqub Tariq [23]. The mausoleum is located not very far from the site where the old Mirpur town was situated. The mausoleum has a mihrab on the western side and two decorative bastions on the eastern side. Two decorative alcoves are positioned on either side of the mihrab as well. The perimeter wall on the south has an arched doorway, which serves the purpose of being the main entrance to the mausoleum. Additionally, the perimeter walls on the north and south are dotted with window openings and small alternate entrances to the mausoleum. There are only a few graves present inside the mausoleum, located near the mihrab. Presently, the mausoleum is surrounded by farmland and vulnerable to irremediable damage by agricultural activity and random fluctuations in the level of the Mangla dam reservoir.</p>		
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A list of archeological remains that figure out significantly in the history of Gakkhars albeit not directly attributed to them has been presented in the following table:

Sr. No.	Archeological Site	Location	Brief Historical Description	Conservation Status	Documented
1.	Rohtas Fort	Dina, Jhelum	The Rohtas fort was built to dominate the north-western edge of the Sur empire and to keep a check on the Gakkhars. The history of the Gakkhars and the fort is intimately linked. After the restoration of the Mughal dynasty in India and consolidation of its power beyond the river Indus, a large garrison fort like Rohtas gradually lost its defensive	Good	Yes

			purpose. Throughout the Mughal era, the area around the fort remained in control of the Bugial sept of the Gakkhars. After the decline of the Mughal empire and the rise of the Sikhs, the Gakkhar chiefs from the village Domeli (Sohawa) managed to retain their influence and even remained in direct control of the fort for extended durations [3, 5-7, 16, 28, 30, 44, 45].		
2.	Helan	Phalia, Mandi Bahauddin	At Helan, a Mughal army defeated Gakkhars and overthrew Sultan Adam Khan. The Sultan had earlier refused to submit to the royal decree of dividing Gakkhar territory into two halves and transferring one-half to his nephew, Sultan Kamal Khan. At less than a mile from Helan, the mausoleum of Mirza Sheikh Ali Beg is located, who was probably a high ranking mansabdar of the Mughal empire. He was slain in the battle against Gakkhars. The presence of a ruined mud fort has also been reported at Helan as late as 1875, which no longer exists [3, 46, 47].	Good	Yes
3.	Adrana	Rawalpindi	Adrana was visited by the Mughal emperor Babur on 17 <sup>th</sup> March, 1519 while returning from his attack on the Pharwala fort. The emperor has reported the existence of a fort in ruins at Adrana. This fort was razed to the ground by Sultan Hathi Khan during his conflict with the Janjuas of the Salt Range. The modern name of the site is Dhok Adrana. A small village exists at the site overlooking the river Soan [1].	Vanished	Not Applicable
4.	Sarai Pakka Khanpur	Gujar Khan, Rawalpindi	The caravanserai was probably constructed during the reign of the emperor Akbar. It	Poor	Yes

			<p>derives its name from the nearby village of Pakka Khanpur. The Gakkhar chief Sultan Jalal Khan has been reported to have occasionally resided at this village along with his family and contributed to its growth and prosperity. The order of words in the name of the village has been reversed over the course of years. The original name of the village was Khanpur Pakka. When the Mughal emperor Alamgir (1618-1707) passed away in Ahmednagar, his son prince Mirza Muhammad Muazzam (1643-1712) was the governor of the Kabul subah. He hurried to confront his half-brothers in the ensuing war of succession and while passing through Pothohar, he halted at Sarai Pakka Khanpur. Sultan Dilawar Khan and Sultan Mubariz Khan, hereditary rulers of the parganahs of Pharwala and Akbarabad-Takhtpari, respectively, who were more inclined towards his younger half-brother prince Mirza Muhammad Azam (1653-1707) decided not to accompany him beyond the limits of their territory. The prince Mirza Muhammad Azam had briefly seized the throne after his father's death. He was defeated and killed in the battle of Jajau on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1707 and prince Mirza Muhammad Muazzam ascended the throne as the Mughal emperor Shah Alam I. In order to teach the Gakkhar chiefs a lesson for their earlier transgression, the emperor decided to take away some of their privileges including the cancellation of the proprietary rights of the parganah of Dangali. Dangali was jointly</p>		
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			held as fief by Sultan Dilawar Khan and Sultan Mubariz Khan who were in service of the Mughal empire [14, 16, 48, 49].		
5.	Sarai Sultan	Dina, Jhelum	The caravanserai is situated at the village Rajopindi in the north-east of the Rohtas fort across the nullah Kahan. At some distance from the caravanserai near the village Khukha, a dysfunctional step-well of considerable size is located. The step-well has been supplanted by a modern water pumping system [18, 28, 30].	Poor	No

In several villages across Pothohar, compactly built step-wells are found. These step-wells are located along ancient routes that previously connected one area to another. They follow a similar design and are generally well built. Majority of these step-wells have been filled in or dried up but a few remain functional to this day. Those that are still being used have been usually remodeled to suit modern needs. In absence of precise historical record, it is almost impossible to identify who ordered the construction of a particular step-well and when. It is plausible that many of these step-wells were commissioned by the Gakkhar chiefs in order to facilitate local and trans-regional travelers following the practice common throughout the Indian subcontinent.

In recent years, besides Rohtas fort, Rawat fort, and Mai Qamro mosque, no conservation work has been carried out at any of the extant archeological sites described above. Many of these sites have been persistently encroached upon by the local population and irrecoverably damaged. These archeological remains are an indispensable part of the historical and cultural legacy of Pothohar. A concentrated effort directed towards their preservation is the need of the hour.

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